

a community called ...

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COMMON CASES : ARE THEY YOURS?

“THE heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked : who can know it ?” is the solemn declaration of Scripture, (Jer. xvii, 9;) and perhaps the deceitfulness of the heart is seldom more clearly shown than in the common excuses persons make to justify their neglect of religion ; excuses which will not even bear the test of conscience now, much less avail when we stand at the bar of a heart-searching God.

Speaking to a fisherman on the depravity of the heart by nature, he said : “ Perhaps you think us fishermen a bad set.” “ Well, I fear very few are on the road to heaven, as

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they neglect the house of God, and appear careless about eternal things." "All I can say," he replied, "is, that I have been in other parts, and we are not half so bad as those at B—— or Y——." "But one leak, my friend, will sink a ship, and one sin will as certainly ruin a soul as a million, unless it be repented of and given up, and pardon be sought through the blood of Christ."

It is a common case; men "comparing themselves among themselves, they are not wise." How many make the sins of others an excuse for their own! Reader, perhaps you are doing so. If so, pause, reflect; and ask, Will this justify me in the sight of a holy God? If not, why rush blindly to destruction? "Awake to righteousness, and sin not."

Take another case. Mr. and Mrs. T—— are hard-working laboring people. Mrs. T—— tried to justify their neglect of religion by saying, "Why, you see we make no profession, and therefore we cannot be so bad as those that do and yet act contrary to it." "Do you think, if a man were tried for stealing, the

judge would let him off if he pleaded in excuse that he never professed to be honest? You know he would not; and can you think your plea will serve you in the day of account?" Mr. T—— observed, "You have put the matter in a right light, and we ought not to neglect our souls."

This, too, is a common case. How many delude themselves with the idea that because they make no profession of religion therefore they are not so accountable as those who do! Reader, is this your case? Are you thus deceiving yourself? Remember, you are accountable for the use or abuse of every religious privilege within your reach. Think you that your forgetfulness of God and of his word, your neglect of prayer, your disregard of the Sabbath and of the house of God, will all be forgiven because you make no profession? You cannot seriously think so.

Take another case. Mrs. G—— had a pious father, and once seemed somewhat impressed with the importance of religion; but she married an ungodly man, and such an association

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led her astray. She has cast off all restraint, and is living without God. But she must try to justify her neglect. When the writer called to press the claims of God upon her she said: "I have seen much of your religious people, and have long made up my mind that all religion is a delusion, for ninety-nine out of every hundred professors are hypocrites." "Do you admit, then, that one in a hundred may be truly religious, and walking in the way to heaven?" "Yes, I believe there may be one, but not more." "Then your conclusion is wrong; for if there were only one truly religious person in the universe it would not only prove that religion is not a delusion, but that *one* would condemn the whole world, even as one family condemned all others in the days of Noah." Gen. vi; Heb. xi, 7.

She seemed convinced of her error, but being driven from one refuge of lies she flew to another. "You know," she said, "we can do nothing of ourselves. God must call us; and when he calls me I will be religious."

* Nay, Mrs. G——, I believe God has repeatedly called you by his providences and by his word. When you followed your departed parent to the grave; when neighbor after neighbor has been cut down by the hand of death; and when on the bed of sickness your own life was despaired of, did not all these things loudly say, ‘Prepare to meet thy God?’ and does not God say in his word, ‘Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation;’ ‘Repent ye, and believe the Gospel;’ ‘Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find;’ for ‘God will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?’ As wise would it be for the farmer to expect a crop of wheat, where he had neither prepared the ground nor sown the seed, as for the sinner presumptuously to wait *for* God, instead of humbly waiting *upon* him in the diligent use of the appointed means, such as prayer, searching the Scriptures, and attending his house.”

Reader, this, too, is a common case. Is it yours? Are you among the number of those who justify their neglect of religion because

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some may be hypocrites? or are you presumptuously waiting for, instead of earnestly seeking, God? Reflect upon your state; consider well your position; read Proverbs i, 24, etc., and ask, "Will my reasons for neglect satisfy the Lord at his appearing, and save my soul from condemnation?" If not, how vain, how foolish, to persist in your present course! "Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die? saith the Lord." Ezek. xxxiii, 11.

Yet one more case: F——, a laboring man, was worldly-minded and negligent of religion, though by no means a scoffer. He would listen with some attention to God's word, acknowledge its truth, and the folly of neglecting its commands; but when reasoned with on his state he would say, "I do not mean always to live as I do now; I shall repent by and by; for I should be scrry to die as I am." Repeatedly was he warned of his danger in putting off so important a matter, and urged at once to seek the Lord, who has said, "He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that

without remedy." Prov. xxix, 1. Mark the result! He was taken ill on a Wednesday evening, suffered excruciating pain, and on the Saturday following he died, apparently as he had lived, without God and without hope. His wife, a pious woman, said: "I watched over him very anxiously; I read, I talked, I prayed, and I wept, but all to no purpose, his pain of body seemed so great he could think of nothing else;" and she continued, weeping as she spoke: "It is not his death I feel so much as I do about his poor soul."

This, too, is a common case. How many, like poor F——, mean to repent, yet from one cause or other delay, day after day, month after month, till death comes unlooked for, and they are hurried, unprepared, into the presence of the Almighty Judge, whose mercy they have so long slighted!

Reader, these are a few of the many vain excuses made by persons, to justify their neglect of religion, which have come under the writer's personal observation. What now, fellow

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traveler to an eternal world, what is your state before God? Are you among the negligent and careless—a class that fearfully abounds? “Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” Gal. vi, 7. Be warned in time; open that neglected book, the Bible; read and pray; it tells you of mercy—of a Saviour whose blood can cleanse you from all sin. Delay not to seek his face, lest death should surprise you as it did poor F——, and you should have to say in bitterness of soul, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved.” Jer. viii, 20.

PHILLIPS & HUNT, 805 Broadway, New York.

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